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ABSTRACT

The four chapters of this book and the many accompanying color photographs describe and portray comprehensive programs of socialist education provided for children in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The introduction indicates the scope of educational objectives within national and international contexts. The first chapter of the book specifies elements of the educational programs. Topics receiving attention are preschool and kindergarten education, the regular 10 year polytechnical school program, special schools for handicapped children, and the program of apprenticeships available to every youth after leaving school. Discussion continues with overviews of the teacher's role and parent school cooperation in the GDR. The second chapter describes the social involvement of school children in the "Ernst Thalmann" Pioneer Organization. It is the task of the Pioneer Organization to draw children into political life, teach them to observe social rights and duties, and provide them meaningful leisure time experiences. Chapter three provides an overview of health care services for children. Chapter four describes meaningful leisure pursuits for all children including participation in programs of the Ministries of Culture and Education, library activities, sports contests, and holiday activities in summer Pioneer camps. Over half of the book consists of more than 125 photographs that are thematically related to claims made in the text. (Author/RH)

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For the good of the child— a basic premise under socialism

Speech by Dr Margot Honecker, Minister of Education, to the opening meeting of the Committee of the GDR Government on the International Year of the Child

The United Nations resolution declaring 1979 the International Year of the Child has the full support of the government and people of the German Democratic Republic. We hope that the various actions connected with it will help make the rights of the child as laid down in the UN Declaration a reality in *all* countries of the world. We share the deep concern expressed in the resolution of the UN General Assembly that in many parts of the globe, these rights are still disregarded—and this twenty years after the adoption of the UN Declaration.

Therefore, people in various parts of the world are increasingly looking with hope towards a future which is already living reality under true socialism—reality where children can grow up in good health, happiness and security. Even in the difficult days of the October Socialist Revolution in Russia, care for the well-being of the children was the supreme determining factor. As with the establishment of the new society human rights were implemented for the first time, so children's rights became part of the written law and finally became part of reality in all socialist countries.

In the nearly thirty-year history of the German Democratic Republic, the concern to create

ever more favourable conditions for the healthy, harmonious and happy development of children has been a constant major priority. The basic principles of the rights of the child proclaimed by the UN are not only constitutionally guaranteed in our country, but find a real reflection in life. With the establishment of workers' and farmers' power, the foundations were laid for guaranteeing a life in material security to every citizen, including the people's most valuable asset—their children. Every mother and father is aware that everything is being done here to ensure that children grow up healthy in mind and body, that their abilities and creative powers can unfold to the full, and that access to education and culture is open in equal measure to all. Under socialism people do not experience fear for the morrow. They have the right to work, are not acquainted with unemployment and enjoy economic security as a matter of course.

It is an indisputable historical fact that the situation of children can only be radically improved on the basis of general social progress and the changing of social living conditions. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the struggle to achieve a happy life for children forms part of the worldwide peoples' struggle for social progress, national independence and freedom from the yoke of suppression and exploitation. Children's happiness—indeed their very existence—is threatened as long as there remain forces which want war for the sake of their own profits. The children's rights called for in the UN Declaration can only really be secured within the struggle for the preservation and consolidation of peace.

The policies of our state are geared to the well-being of man and thus, above all, to peace. Consequently, in our country the education of young people is a training in the spirit of peace and readiness to protect peace. Friendship with all peoples and solidarity with those striving for their liberation constitutes the supreme principle of our state—the concern of our schools, families and society as a whole.

We should always remember the grave heritage bequeathed to us by German imperialism. At the start of our path—after the liberation of our people from Hitler's fascism by the glorious Soviet army—the young people remained poisoned by fascist ideology; they had been brought up in the evil spirit of militarism and chauvinism. 25 per cent of all children of school age had lost their parents and were wandering the streets, homeless and without enough food or clothing. A third of all schools had been destroyed. A great deal of courage, confidence and belief in personal strength, in the strength of the people, was needed to start the new democratic reconstruction, amidst the mental and material debris. The ineffaceable achievements of the working class include the fact that—in alliance with other working people and under the leadership of the Marxist-Leninist party—it has laid safely and securely, with the construction of the new society, all the founda-

tions essential for children to live in happiness and peace.

As is widely known, the German Democratic Republic belongs to those countries which, according to UN statistics, lead the world in terms of medical care for mothers and children, the proportion of crèche and kindergarten places, the provision of equal educational opportunities for all, literature for children, libraries, theatres and holiday services—in other words, all those factors which are important for the development of the rising generation.

If, for example, we state that in the course of our comprehensive socio-political programme, 922,000 dwellings were built in our country in the period from 1971 to 1977—thus improving living conditions for approximately three million people or every sixth citizen—then everyone is aware of the service rendered to children, for good housing conditions are essential for children's healthy development. Comprehensive steps have been taken for the benefit of mother and child. Families with many children enjoy particular material and financial benefits. Attendance at a ten-year comprehensive polytechnical school with subsequent vocational training is guranteed to all children. More than 60 per cent of all children up to the age of three are looked after in crèches, and more than 90 per cent of all three-to-six-year-olds attend a kindergarten. Three quarters of all children in grades 1 to 4 can make constructive use of their free time in after-school centres. There are many leisure opportunities for young people, notably in Young Pioneer houses, the centres of young naturalists, technologists and hikers, and youth hostels, as well as extensive holiday schemes.

The efforts of schools, parents and the youth and children's organization to ensure the healthy mental and moral development of our boys and girls are effectively reinforced by the mass media, through television and radio programmes for children, through special libraries, theatres, puppet shows and cinemas. Theatre companies, orchestras, museums and art galleries of international renown all have a bearing on the cultural education of our children. The staff of our national memorials also make a considerable contribution to the raising of our children in the spirit of the best traditions of our people, in the spirit of the anti-fascist fighters. Every year, about 17 million books for young readers are printed in our country. More than 25 million books are borrowed by children from public libraries. In our country not a line is printed, no word or picture broadcast, that does not serve the humanistic nature of our educational system, an education based on love and respect for people and their work, on friendship among peoples, on solidarity and a love of peace.

In the "Ernst Thälmann" Pioneer Organization, in the Free German Youth and in interest groups of every kind, young people have wide scope for individual creative activities in the fields of natural science, technology, politics, sports, art and culture. They have ample op-

portunity to measure and develop their powers and to play an active part in the development of their homeland, the German Democratic Republic. Their concrete bonds of friendship with the children of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries are as countless as are their manifestations of active solidarity with children throughout the world.

Our socialist state is constantly undertaking new efforts to do everything possible for the child's intellectual welfare, to shape the child's essential being, to educate him or her in moral standards which are characteristic of socialist society and which are marked by relations of mutual respect and assistance—trusting, comradely cooperation to achieve joint worthy aims. Our socialist society has produced new moral values which serve the instillation of truly human qualities.

Bourgeois ideologists still, or again, maintain today that the child's development potential is determined by demographic, geographic or other natural factors. This is done to obscure the fact that it is dependent primarily on the nature of the prevailing social system. Their thesis is refuted not least by the development of those countries which have liberated themselves from the imperialist yoke and have set off along a socialist-oriented path of development. In spite of the dire heritage which they took over (e.g. illiteracy), these countries have begun, under conditions of great strain, to overcome the legacy; indeed, they have done more—they have started to establish new educational opportunities for all children. It is with sympathy and esteem that we regard the great successes already achieved in this field.

Our sympathy and solidarity goes out to the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America who are still weighed down by the heavy burden of neo-colonialism and dictatorships. It is a cruel fact that over 350 million children in the world lack the vital necessities for life, that every day children die of malnutrition, although there is enough bread to go round. Fascist regimes such as that of apartheid refuse the most basic rights to children with dark skin. How many children are born in refugee camps and die there, are crowded in ghettos or lose their fathers and mothers through murders and torture perpetrated by fascist military juntas! How many children of migrant workers can barely manage to survive! The German Democratic Republic stands alongside all those who strive for liberation from exploitation and oppression, for national self-determination and for the observance and consolidation of peace as the fundamental condition for human existence.

In future as hitherto, the German Democratic Republic will not fail in its solidarity with and support for the children in Chile, Uruguay and other Latin American countries. We stand steadfastly alongside the peoples of the Arab world, particularly the Palestinian people, and alongside all peoples suffering under fascism, apartheid, racism and Zionism.

It would be wrong to think that very much has been done in the advanced imperialist states to implement the special protection for children set out in the UN Declaration, to establish the pre-conditions for them to develop physically, intellectually, emotionally, morally and socially, in health, freedom and dignity. It must be noted with concern that there the children's rights contained in the UN Declaration are being disregarded.

In imperialist states, unemployment, profiteering, high rents and economic insecurity burden family life in many households and lead to living conditions which are hostile to children. The abuse of drugs and alcohol among children is on the increase; violence and the incidence of crimes among children and adolescents is also growing. No less dangerous is the fact that the rising generation is increasingly being contaminated by the perilous poison of anti-communism, fascism, revanchism and racism. This hostility to children is a feature of capitalism in its habitual forms.

We must use the International Year of the Child as an occasion to vehemently bring charges against those who commit crimes against children, who violate their most basic rights—the right to live and the right to peace. The implementation of the UN Declaration concerning children's rights requires, first and foremost, a persistent, determined struggle against the threat of war, for détente and disarmament, and for the continuation of the policy of peaceful coexistence.

It is of prime importance to halt the arms race and to ban the neutron bomb, the production of which—planned by the USA—would increase the danger of a nuclear war and would lead to a stepping up of the arms race. An uncompromising struggle for the mutual, unconditional renunciation of the production and deployment of the neutron bomb must constitute the order of the day for all forces which are serious in their desire for the achievement of peace.

Nobody can close their eyes to the fact that in 1978 the military budget of the USA, at 112 thousand million dollars, has reached a level ten times that of 1945. The planned construction of the neutron bomb would swallow up an additional 60 thousand million dollars. In 1978 the Federal Republic of Germany had an arms budget of more than 54 thousand million DM, the highest total to date.

What huge sums of money could be set free through the cessation of the arms race, through agreements on effective measures for arms limitation and the implementation of disarmament! The funds saved could be used to serve the well-being of peoples and above all to achieve a happy life for the children of all states. Of the 400 thousand million dollars spent annually in the world on armament, as little as 4 thousand million would suffice to feed 200 million starving children and a further 9 thousand million dollars would be enough to teach 800 million people on our globe to read and write.

The latest proposals made by the Soviet Union and the other socialist states point to a constructive path: halting of the production of nuclear weapons, banning of all other types of weapons of mass destruction, cessation of the development of new conventional weapons with vast destructive potential and renunciation of increases in the size of armies. Contractual agreement on these proposals in the form of an accord valid under international law would promote the process of détente and thus would serve the maintenance of peace.

The protection of our world, its preservation for the younger generation in all its wealth and beauty, not devastated by the fires of a nuclear war—this must be the objective of all mankind's thoughts and endeavours. We regard this as the priority task of all activities undertaken within the framework of the International Year of the Child.

The GDR will make its contribution to this special year under the slogan: "A happy childhood in a world of peace, friendship among nations and international solidarity". This will be achieved primarily through the further consistent implementation of the policy of the peaceful construction of our advanced socialist society (as outlined at the 9th Congress of the SED), and through the continued realization of our programme of growth, prosperity and stability, in order to render the life of man and the present and future of our children still richer, happier and more secure.

A.
A general and high level of education for all children

Guaranteed access for everyone to education, culture and science is one of the fundamental human rights implemented under socialism. Equal opportunities and possibilities for all children in socialist society constitute an important prerequisite for the free development and general unfolding of the individual's character. It is one of the great revolutionary achievements of the socialist German state that all educational privileges have been removed and all children of the people are guaranteed an equally high level of education, irrespective of the parents' social position, of ideology and religion. In the past three decades in the GDR, all educational opportunities have been systematically opened up and methodically developed —starting from the general democratization of the educational system, via the establishment in 1959 of ten years of compulsory comprehensive polytechnical schooling for all children, to the act of 1965 dealing with the integrated socialist educational system. This act states: „It shall be the objective of all institutions in the educational system to provide a high standard education for all people, resulting in the general and harmonious development of socialist personalities who consciously organize their social activities, transform nature and lead a decent, satisfying and happy life."

Upbringing to instil a sense of responsibility

It is the aim of education and instruction in our schools to provide all children with a well-founded, scientific, general education and to enable them to think creatively and act independently. They are brought up in the spirit of the working-class ideology, with respect for man and other nations; they are taught to stand up for peace and the happiness of all mankind.

It is quite normal that in a socialist state the overall education and instruction of children and young people should be determined by the ideology of the working class and that it should entail education leading to communist moral principles, socialist patriotism and proletarian internationalism. We want to train a young generation which loves its fatherland and feels committed to maintaining the best traditions of the German people and the German working class, which participates knowingly and with conviction in the further construction of socialism in our country and will one day complete this task. Our children should learn how to understand inter-relationships and laws of social development, how to appreciate them correctly and to act with corresponding responsibility.

Communist education also invoives awakening and securing in children and young people the readiness to act for peace, freedom and the implementation of human rights throughout the world, and to extend solidarity to all peoples struggling for national and social liberation. Children in the GDR are brought up not least in the spirit of deep love for and close friendship with the Soviet Union, the world's first socialist state, and all other socialist countries. They are made aware that their homeland can only develop in stability and peace through a firm alliance with the Soviet Union and within the community of all socialist states.

In the educational and training establishments for the rising generation, scientific instruction, productive work and physical training are linked together in the best way possible. This is in line with the educational ideal of the revolutionary workers' movement, which is geared towards the model, conceived by Karl Marx, of the fully rounded, complete being. On the basis of the integrated educational system and all institutions serving the well-being of children, everything is done in our society to implement this ideal and to mould our children into happy beings, ready for life.

Integrated education offers equal opportunities to all

In the GDR it is compulsory for every child to attend, from the age of six, the ten-year comprehensive polytechnical school. It stands at the heart of our educational system, which

includes in addition: establishments of pre-school education (crèches and kindergartens), institutions for vocational training, establishments offering courses which lead to the matriculation requirements for higher education ("Abitur" classes), engineering and technical schools, universities and colleges, and institutions for adult education and further training.

For children with physical and mental handicaps there exist special schools, special pre-school education facilities and vocational training institutions. All these educational establishments are run by the state and are secular, and attendance is free for every child, young person and adult. This structure of the educational system enables children and young people—regardless of sex, race, nationality, social origin and position, religion and ideology—to acquire a high level of education in line with their talents and capabilities and to proceed right to the highest educational establishments.

At present, more than 2.5 million youngsters attend the approximately 6,000 ten-year comprehensive polytechnical schools in the GDR. They have at their disposal over 110,000 classrooms, including almost 54,200 rooms adapted for the teaching of specific subjects and 9,000 workshops for polytechnical instruction. Every comprehensive school has teaching aids to an average value of 250,000 marks; in the last ten years alone, the GDR government has made available more than 1.2 thousand million marks to equip schools with modern teaching aids. In this way, the more than 200,000 teachers employed in the comprehensive schools are given favourable material conditions to fulfil their high responsibility for the education and instruction of our state's youngest citizens. They undertake this as highly educated specialists who are closely linked to the policies and ideology of the working class, with personal commitment and with affection for the children.

Conditions are alike in town and countryside, ensuring a high level of education for all children of the people. The introduction of ten-year schooling in rural areas was a particularly complicated process. It was a matter of overcoming the centuries-old backwardness of country schools and achieving the educational level of the establishments in towns. In 1946, there were more than 4,000 rural schools consisting of only one classroom on the territory of what is now the GDR. Now, through the setting up of central schools, all children and young people in the country areas have the same educational opportunities. As early as 1959, the last rural schools with one classroom were abolished.

Social education for children at a pre-school age?

In 1978 in the GDR, 60 per cent of all children under the age of three were looked after during the day in crèches, and more than 90 per cent of children aged between three and six were accommodated in kindergartens. This does not yet fully cover the demand for places in crèches and kindergartens, but we have achieved a situation considered worthy of note on an international scale. Further necessary expansion is planned and will be implemented continuously with the aim of being able to satisfy all wishes in the near future.

The high requirement of places in crèches and kindergartens is due primarily to the fact that more than 87 per cent of all women in our country are gainfully employed—a normal phenomenon in view of the reality of equal rights for women in socialist society. However, these pre-school institutions do not merely have a socio-political significance—namely to support women and families—they also constitute a major educational achievement. Allowing the smallest children to experience life and instruction in a community of others of the same age helps considerably to implement the integrated educational system at pre-school age. Above all, children leaving kindergarten have already acquired a certain basic level of knowledge and capabilities, requirements and habits, and all teachers in the first grade of the ten-year school can build on this foundation.

With all the advantages evident in the care and instruction of children in pre-school establishments, we do not overlook the great importance of family life for the harmonious development of all children. It is in the family that the foundations are laid for the physical, intellectual and moral development of young people; it is here that factors come into play which exert a decisive influence on the development of the individual and on the stamping of his character—factors which largely determine the whole life of the child. Consequently, the state is making increased efforts to constantly improve the material and economic security enjoyed by the family. In the past few years, many and varied measures have been implemented to promote the position of mother and child and to improve the living conditions of all families, which have a direct effect on the well-being and happiness of children.

How are children looked after, educated and trained in crèches and kindergartens?

The main concern of the crèches is to see that the children develop in good health and in physical and mental harmony. Trained medical and educational specialists are on hand. Language and thought, perception and capability of experience, basic forms of posture and movement, elementary norms of hygiene and simple forms of socialist behaviour are all developed. The children are accustomed to order and regu-

larity, independence is encouraged according to age and they acquire a multitude of practical capabilities and skills. Even at this early age, it is apparent that knowledge is often gained more rapidly from games played in a group rather than alone at home. Moreover such activities give more pleasure and the children really feel at ease. In the crèches, special attention is devoted to all-round physical education under conditions of light, fresh air and sunshine, as for this age group it is so very important to fortify the child's constitution.

Today most children between the age of three and six attend kindergarten. Soon it will be possible to accommodate all children of this age in kindergartens, if their parents so desire. More than 50,000 trained kindergarten staff are employed in the 11,700 kindergartens in the GDR. Attendance of kindergartens is free, as is, moreover, attendance of crèches. Parents only pay a small amount towards the cost of the meals: 0.35 marks per day per child in the kindergartens and 1.40 marks in the crèches. The financial contribution can either be reduced or waived completely in the case of large families, single parent families with three or more children and families whose income justifies state support. In 1978, subsidies from the national budget amounted to 1,035 marks per place in a municipal kindergarten and to 2,647 marks per place in a crèche.

Teaching work in the kindergartens is based on an education and instruction plan. Children learn to be increasingly independent and involved actively in the community. They are brought up to love peace and to show solidarity with and respect for other peoples. In a manner appropriate to their age, they are prepared for learning in school and are acquainted with socialist life, the activities of working people, their environment and nature. Thus, many kindergartens maintain close links with sponsoring brigades in socialist enterprises. These ties are of mutual value; the children visit the workers at their place of employment and learn to respect work, and on the other hand, the sponsoring brigade looks after "its" group of children and helps, for example, with the decoration and improvement of the rooms and grounds of the kindergarten.

The most important means of instruction within the kindergarten is the playing of games, whereby children are brought into contact with their environment and can develop their physical and intellectual capabilities. Particular importance is attached to training in the use of their native tongue. At play and in activities such as painting, singing and model-making, the children are encouraged to be attentive, to display imagination and to develop a reasoning power. Children of pre-school age are got used to the idea of taking on simple duties, helping themselves, and cultivating friendships, a mutual readiness to help and a feeling of fellowship. Thus they feel secure in their little group, they have their best playmates there and make their first friends.

We have found on the basis of experience

that the joint involvement of kindergarten and the family in the upbringing of children presents the most favourable conditions for the latter's sound development. Consequently, kindergarten staff and parents work together continuously in close cooperation: through conversations whenever the children are brought to or collected from the kindergarten and through parents' evenings, which take place regularly and where parents can get to know others, exchange opinions and experiences and discuss educational problems with the kindergarten supervisor. The work of each individual kindergarten is backed up by elected parental representative bodies.

What does the socialist school have to offer?

At the age of six, children enter the ten-year comprehensive polytechnical school which is the compulsory form of schooling for all youngsters.

The comprehensive school provides a fundamental, wide-ranging education which is designed to serve the all-round development of socialist beings. This general education includes everything that makes up the essential life and the wealth of relations and activities of man in a socialist society. According to current knowledge, German, mathematics, natural sciences, technology, economics, social sciences, foreign languages, literature, art and physical training constitute indispensable aspects of an up-to-date general education. In all these areas, scientific, specialist instruction is given in the comprehensive schools by thoroughly trained subject teachers.

A typical characteristic of our socialist comprehensive school is its polytechnical nature. Polytechnical instruction of pupils is firmly integrated into the overall educational system, like the tasks of political, ideological and moral education. Laws, inter-relationships and facts of production, technology and labour are brought into mathematical, scientific and social instruction. In this way, overall education attains a high degree of relevance to life. At the same time, through a system of polytechnical subjects, all pupils are provided with the same basic theoretical and practical occupational knowledge and skills, which represent vital preliminary steps for almost 80 per cent of all jobs in the national economy. In socialist enterprises, alongside workers and cooperative farmers, pupils gain necessary social experience which is very important for their character development.

The central feature of schooling is of course scientific, specialized instruction, which is carried out on the basis of a mandatory timetable and obligatory curricula and textbooks. Over a period of ten years, children and adolescents spend an average of five to seven hours a day at school. In view of its high targets, the educational programme of our school is exact-

ing. 41.4 per cent of total lesson time during the ten years of compulsory schooling is devoted to instruction in social sciences, German, literature and art. 29.8 per cent of the lessons are taken up by mathematics and natural sciences. 10.6 per cent of the time is available for introduction to socialist production and for productive work. A further 10.6 per cent of lessons are devoted to the learning of foreign languages and 7.9 per cent to sports instruction. These proportions are designed to achieve an all-round, harmonious development of all children's and young people's capabilities.

However, for children and adolescents, the socialist school provides a great deal more than mere instruction. Life at school can be very varied. For example, after lessons are over, all pupils have an opportunity to pursue their special inclinations, hobbies and wishes in interest groups and teams. In these they can make models, paint, construct things, carry out experiments, sing, dance, play music, take part in sports and acquire special knowledge and skills. Frequently talents emerge and these are resolutely encouraged.

After lessons are over, pupils from the first to the fourth grade can attend after-school centres, if their parents so desire. These are facilities providing extracurricular instruction for and supervision of the pupils. The supervisors of these centres—mostly trained teachers—ensure that after lessons are over the youngest pupils can relax in sports and games, can do their homework in peace and can make meaningful use of the time. In every school in the GDR, children can have a hot midday meal and they are provided with milk. The costs are subsidized by the state. Parents pay a mere 0.35 marks towards the midday meal, while the state adds between 1 mark and 1.35 marks. In 1978, the state subsidy for school meals amounted to 601 million marks.

Teachers, the "Ernst Thälmann" Pioneer Organization and the Free German Youth—the vast majority of children and young people belong to these organizations—ensure that all pupils are happy at school, that they can learn effectively, pursue their interests and develop creative activities.

Appropriate instruction for each age group

The ten-year comprehensive school is subdivided into three levels. The *lower level* comprises grades one to three. When, on 1 September (World Peace Day), the youngest pupils embark upon their school career, most of them have already attended kindergarten for three years and have acquired important basic knowledge and experience there. In the first grade, instruction can, correspondingly, be built on this foundation.

In the first grade, a start is made with the systematic teaching of the subjects: German, mathematics, local history and geography,

handicrafts and gardening, music, drawing and sport. In grades one to three, pupils acquire basic skills in reading and writing, knowledge and proficiency in mathematics, age-related insights into natural phenomena and society, and contact with their environment.

In line with the revised curricula for the comprehensive schools, introduced in 1968, the lower level was also reshaped. It has been adapted to meet the increased capabilities of children in this age group and has thus ensured maximum development of their intellectual and physical strengths, moral qualities and modes of behaviour. Not only is stress laid on the acquisition of sound knowledge, important facts and data, but also a start is made with the imparting of basic methods of scientific thought and independent assimilation of knowledge.

The observance of particular features relevant to the age group in question constitutes an important condition for successful learning during the first grades at school. This requires an intelligent choice of teaching methods, conscious promotion of the children's independence and activities, a learning rhythm appropriate to the age group, alternation between intellectual and physical work, between exertion and relaxation, and a friendly environment along with a happy atmosphere in the group. In close association, teachers, parents and children ensure that all pupils achieve the educational target of the lower level and can commence the next phase of their schooling, well equipped to meet the challenges.

The *intermediate level* of the comprehensive school comprises grades four to six. The fourth grade has the task of extending and perfecting the pupils' knowledge and skills and thus forms a transition to the totally specialized instruction at the intermediate level.

In the fifth grade, natural science, social science and foreign language lessons are introduced. The pupils are acquainted more thoroughly with community life, with work, sciences, technology and culture, and they become increasingly involved in socially useful activities. In German, courses continue in literature, grammar and orthography; special attention is devoted to linguistic expression. In mathematics, the pupils consolidate their knowledge of and skill in calculations involving natural numbers, they become acquainted with fractions and solve varied applied problems. In the subjects of biology, geography and physics, they acquire systematic knowledge of scientific processes and become acquainted with the use of scientific methods, procedures and techniques. Craft and gardening lessons involve simple knowledge of technology, agricultural biology and economics, as well as work knowledge and skills. History and geography lessons provide reliable and readily applicable historical, geographical and political knowledge. The pupils are introduced to initial principles of the laws and inter-relationships underlying social development and revolutionary changes. It is the aim of history lessons to develop in our children a living relationship with the history

of mankind, its culture and particularly with the struggles waged by the working class and with all progressive traditions.

In the fifth grade, compulsory instruction in the Russian language begins for all pupils. This is aimed primarily at the development of aural and oral skills and capabilities, translation and the acquisition of sound grammatical knowledge. The fact that every child gains a basic command of a foreign language testifies to the high level of general education in our schools. In addition, two thirds of all pupils take the option of learning a second world language.

In artistic subjects, the pupils acquire skills and proficiency in singing, playing music, drawing, painting and making models. They are familiarized with the art and cultural treasures of our people and other nations. They learn that art enriches life and the ways in which it can be actively and creatively assimilated.

By means of varied basic physical training instruction, a relatively high degree of physical and sports performance is achieved by pupils. More than 97 per cent of all pupils learn to swim during their school career.

Comprehensive school education is completed at the *upper level*, comprising grades seven to ten. Instruction in German language and literature, Russian, mathematics, physics, astronomy, chemistry, biology, geography, polytechnical training (which includes an introduction to socialist production, technical drawing and productive labour), history, civics, drawing, music and sport brings pupils increasingly to a recognition of laws in nature and society, and supplements their knowledge as well as their theoretical and practical skills. Instruction is geared more and more to the employment of knowledge in social practice and to the acquisition of fundamental techniques for intellectual work. Pupils are made capable of independently acquiring, extending and consolidating their knowledge and proficiencies. Pupils at the upper level have the opportunity of taking part in optional classes. For example, from grade seven they can learn a second foreign language, normally English or French. Optional courses and work groups with a skeleton programme in the spheres of mathematics, technology, natural and social sciences, art and culture offer all pupils a chance of extending their knowledge in special spheres and developing their interests and inclinations.

Starting in the seventh grade, pupils participate in productive labour appropriate to their age. More than one million youngsters from grades seven to ten receive polytechnical instruction in some 4,000 enterprises. Over 3,000 polytechnical centres and workshops have been set up for this purpose and more than 30,000 working people—60 per cent of them skilled workers and supervisory workers—guide the pupils and look after them during their productive work. In the ninth and tenth grades, particular attention is paid to those activities which serve the further development of a general work capability and a socialist mode of be-

haviour. Polytechnical instruction is by its nature a stage in the preparation for future employment, but at this point it does not give any specialized training. At the upper level, numerous other measures are taken regarding career guidance and choice.

With the removal of educational privileges and the establishment of the integrated school for all children of the people, a break was also made in the GDR with all bourgeois theories of aptitude and an elite. Our school starts from the premise that all children are capable of advancement, provided that they are given equal opportunities. In addition, high requirements encourage the optimum development of each individual. It is a direct concern of the socialist educational system, on the basis of the all-round development of the individual, to pave the way for every child to release his or her potential gifts and talents.

For this reason, within the framework of the educational system—though only on a limited scale—there exist special schools and classes. These fulfil a twofold task: firstly they give early encouragement to pupils with particular skills and achievements, gifts and talents. Secondly, they help to cover the need for highly qualified specialists in the fields of economics, science etc., which is increasing as a result of the scientific and technological revolution, and further social development. There are classes with intensified mathematics instruction (from the 9th grade), extended language instruction (from the 3rd grade), special classes for specific technological disciplines (from the 9th grade), with extended instruction in artistic subjects, and special sports schools for children and adolescents. These all lead to the final examination level of the ten-year school or to the matriculation requirements for entry to higher education. The curricula of the comprehensive school or the extended comprehensive school serve as the basis for all subjects. Instruction in the specialized subjects is extended in scope and content.

Special schools of handicapped children

Our state also devotes particular attention and care to those children who, on account of physical or mental disabilities, have a limited capacity for the assimilation of knowledge and skills. It is part of the humanistic nature of socialist society that these children, young people and adults are guaranteed, in keeping with their potential, optimum education and training in special schools and special educational institutions. In order to create favourable conditions for the handicapped children's and young people's development and future contribution in life, there exist educational establishments differentiated according to pedagogic and medical principles. In 1978, there were 546 special schools for the handicapped: schools for the hard of hearing, the deaf, the partially

sighted, the blind, those with speech defects and the physically handicapped. With due regard for the type of disability, children attending these schools receive instruction corresponding to that of the comprehensive school.

In these special schools, the children are usually looked after for the whole day, so that after lessons they can enjoy meaningful leisure pursuits, under the direction of specially trained teachers. They have at their disposal all the mechanical aids they may require to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, skills and proficiencies. Specially trained teachers ensure not only that these children receive maximum education and training, but also that they can feel at ease, satisfied and happy in the community.

Children who are principally retarded in their ability to assimilate knowledge, in the higher thought processes and language, are taught in remedial schools, corresponding to the degree of their disability. All physically and mentally handicapped young people receive vocational training in line with their abilities and employment is guaranteed for them all. The special aid and encouragement for all mentally and physically handicapped persons is laid down in the laws of the GDR.

Advancement ensured after leaving school

All young people in the GDR who successfully complete the final examination of the ten-year school know that they are sure of vocational training if they decide not to continue their education. The right and the duty to learn a trade are stipulated in our country's constitution and are directly linked to the right to work, which is likewise guaranteed constitutionally. Without exception, an apprenticeship is available to every school-leaver. On completion of vocational training, the young skilled worker is guaranteed a job in his or her learned profession.

The safeguarding of these rights presupposes meticulous labour planning for the various professions. In the GDR, some years before the young skilled workers start their working life, the nationally-owned enterprises in all branches of the economy must be in a position to tell pupils and parents which trades will be needed at the time when these pupils will conclude their vocational training. This long-range planning makes it easier for children and parents to acquaint themselves at an early stage with the demands of their chosen profession, and to synchronize personal interests and inclinations with social requirements.

At present, skilled workers are trained in 291 professions. Vocational training after completion of the tenth grade of the comprehensive

school normally lasts for two years. It is aimed equally at great versatility and a high degree of specialization on the part of the skilled worker. It involves a broad, basic vocational training and, following on from this, special training, which both enable the young skilled worker to operate independently and creatively, to master the tasks of scientific and technological progress and to participate in planning and managing the socialist enterprise.

In the GDR, the path to the highest educational institutions—namely the universities and colleges—is open to all young people with the appropriate level of attainment. There are several ways to acquire the necessary matriculation requirements, the "Abitur". The direct path from the ten-year school to the acquisition of the "Abitur" is via two years' attendance of an extended comprehensive polytechnical school (grades eleven and twelve). If a youngster takes up an apprenticeship, he or she can reach "Abitur" standard by attending special "Abitur" classes in vocational training establishments, this course lasting three years. Through such "Abitur" classes within the framework of vocational training, young people gain the "Abitur" and a qualification as a skilled worker at one and the same time. The matriculation requirements for entry to higher education courses can also be acquired by attendance of evening classes, a technical or engineering school, through special courses and through full-time or evening studies at appropriate university and college institutions. This proven system offers manifold opportunities for gifted young people to progress to universities and colleges at any time.

It is one of the significant social and educational achievements of the workers' and farmers' state that, according to an average taken over many years, more than 50 per cent of all students at universities and colleges have their social origins in the working class or the class of cooperative farmers. Yet further evidence that all social privileges left by the age of capitalism have been overcome in the educational system of our socialist state.

Role of the teacher in socialist society

An old educational saying states that a school is as good as its teachers. It is to teachers and educators that parents entrust their most valuable asset, namely their children. It is on the teachers' ability, commitment and educational skills that all success in the education and training of today's younger generation largely depends — young people who are one day to complete the construction of socialism in our state. Thus teachers are invested with a high degree of responsibility and are set a considerable task which is of importance for the development of society as a whole. On the basis of the socialist social order, they are able to implement the humanistic traditions of pro-

gressive bourgeois teachers and the educational ideas of the revolutionary workers' movement.

In our country, no teacher or instructor stands alone in the fulfilment of his or her responsibilities. The basis of all successful teaching work in our schools is the cohesion of the teaching staff. Teachers receive a great deal of varied support from governmental and social bodies, scientific organizations, nationally-owned enterprises and above all from parents, with whom they work in close cooperation.
In the GDR, the teaching profession is highly respected and enjoys a considerable degree of social prestige. Teachers live in material and economic security. Society's respect and responsibility for the work of its teachers has been clearly demonstrated in recent years by repeated wage increases, as well as a generous new regulation regarding support for teachers in case of illness, disablement and in old age— this constitutes a component of the social welfare programme adopted by the 9th Congress of the SED in 1976.

At teacher-training institutes, colleges of education and universities, teachers receive thorough, comprehensive, scientific instruction in teaching methods and psychology — a training which is closely linked to teaching practice. In four-year courses at colleges and universities, subject teachers are trained who are capable of taking lessons in two subjects. However, teacher training does not just lay stress on a high degree of academic and pedagogic knowledge. It is equally important to instil in all future teachers a conscious attitude and a great sense of responsibility for their profession.

All teachers have a variety of opportunities for further training, which enables them to continuously improve the knowledge they acquired during their studies, and to clarify new questions related to theory and practice. Every year, more than 40,000 teachers and instructors take advantage of these in-service training facilities.

The high standing enjoyed by teachers in our society is also clearly demonstrated every year on 12 June, the „Day of the Teacher". This is an occasion for celebrations by the entire population, when teachers are thanked by all — from children up to the government — for their responsible work. Every year, the best teachers are awarded the title „Meritorious Teacher of the People" or they are presented with other honours and awards.

Close cooperation between school and parental home

School, parental home, enterprise, the socialist youth association and its "Ernst Thälmann" Pioneer Organization all work in close cooperation for the education of children and young people. The close links between school and family constitute one of the most valuable tra-

ditions of our country's educational policy. We regard the bringing up of children to be healthy, happy people, well-rounded socialist beings, as a major social duty of parents and school. Education within the family can have no substitute, for it is here that the foundations are laid for the child's physical, intellectual and moral development and for the moulding of his or her character.

A particularly lasting influence is exerted on the child's development by the very fact of living together with parents and brothers and sisters, by the relations between those closest to the child and by the way of life within the family. Socialist democracy in our country is apparent in the fact that parental home and school work together in close cooperation and parents exert an influence on the school in a variety of ways.

In every school there is a parent-teacher association and each class has its own parent's group. These consist of elected representatives from among the parents and are legally entitled to assist in the regulation of school affairs. In the academic year 1977-78, more than 680,000 elected parents' representatives were active in the comprehensive schools—this means that from every fourth family with children of school age, either the father or the mother was a member of a parents' group or of a parent-teacher association. These parental representatives give a great deal of varied support to the educational work in the schools, they exchange experiences and also influence education within the family. They undertake home visits and have discussions with parents; they adopt responsibility for pupils with difficulties in some particular area of learning; they accompany the classes on outings or to swimming lessons; they back up the work of the after-school centre and the activities of the FDJ and Pioneer groups.

Likewise, along with the teachers, the elected parents' representatives endeavour to involve all parents in the life and work of the school. Parents are given advice and help at meetings held several times a year for the parents of pupils in each class and through discussions at "parent's surgeries", while heed is paid to parents' suggestions and wishes for the improvement of work in the school. In this way, an integrated, successful procedure is largely achieved, which incorporates all those involved in the education of children. No family should be left alone to cope with educational worries—a principle which is put into practice in the GDR. The responsibility of society as a whole for the education of children is apparent everywhere.

Today we can say that the educational system in our socialist state has implemented the humanistic principle contained in the demand made in the "Declaration of the Rights of the Child" that society should give of its best, so that all children can have a happy childhood and are well prepared for life in society.

II.
Social involvement of children in the "Ernst Thälmann" Pioneer Organization

When in 1979 we mark the International Year of the Child and, in the same year, the people of the German Democratic Republic celebrate the 30th anniversary of the founding of their socialist state, then the "Ernst Thälmann" Pioneer Organization can look back on more than 30 years of its activities. It was founded on 13 December 1948 as the integrated socialist mass organization for children of the German Democratic Republic. From the first it has intentionally been a political organization and, in the best possible way, it provides democratic representation of the interests of the younger generation. It is an organic component in our state's system of educators and instructors.

Tasks and traditions

It is the task of the organization to draw children into political life, to teach them to observe social rights and duties, and to grant them the possibility of spending their leisure time in a meaningful manner. The Pioneers experience joy and fun, common work and play, mutual help and support. They are brought up to love peace, to exhibit international friendship and solidarity, and they learn how in practice they can work towards these ends.

The "Ernst Thälmann" Pioneer Organization is very closely allied to our school and its activities are completely integrated in the educational process. It helps to make children

familiar with conscious learning and exerts a considerable educational influence. But there is not just unity of action between Pioneer Organization and school, there is also close cooperation between Pioneer Organization and parental home. It is not by chance that the three corners of the Pioneer neckerchief—which is worn by all members of the movement—symbolize the unity between school, family and Pioneer Organization.

The "Ernst Thälmann" Pioneer Organization is administered by the Central Council of the Free German Youth. Its chairman is also secretary of the Central Council. Within schools, the Pioneer Organization and the youth association work in close cooperation with each other. The FDJ helps the Pioneers in a variety of ways. It delegates its best members to act as Pioneer leaders, supervisors of work groups and helpers for the youngsters' organization.

The integrated mass organization for children in the GDR—at present it has a membership of 1,740,000 boys and girls—is based on the progressive traditions of the German proletarian youth and children's movement of the time prior to 1933, the year when Hitler fascism came to power. At that time, it was above all the Communist Party of Germany and the Communist Youth League which, via their children's groups and the *Rote Jungpioniere* organization, did everything possible under capitalist conditions to shape a happy life for workers' children.

Today our children cherish and keep alive the knowledge of such activities undertaken by communists in the interest of children, and they recall the actions of the children's groups themselves. The Pioneers listen with interest to the tales of veteran workers about life in the former Rote Jungpioniere groups, about tent-camps, hikes and colourful celebrations, but they also follow stories of the battles waged against child labour and exploitation, and for free school meals, play areas and children's holiday camps.

Thus the name "Ernst Thälmann", which was awarded to the Pioneer Organization in 1952 by the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, is more than a mere title. It is rather a complete programme covering the content and aims for the Pioneer Organization's work. For Ernst Thälmann was a fervent anti-fascist, an internationally respected leader of the revolutionary German working class, until Hitler's fascists foully murdered him in 1944 in the Buchenwald concentration camp. The Pioneers regard his heroic life as a model; they intend to continue and complete his struggle for a happy life for all children and the entire working population under the conditions prevailing in the socialist state created by and belonging to the working class. This is clearly evident in the most important symbol of the Pioneer Organization, the red standard of honour, on which Ernst Thälmann and Wilhelm Pieck, the first workers' President of the German Democratic Republic, are depicted.

Standards and organization of Pioneer life

Membership of the "Ernst Thälmann" Pioneer Organization is of course voluntary. Any school pupil up to the age of 14 may join. Members from the first three grades (aged six to nine) are Young Pioneers. They wear a blue neckerchief along with the standard Pioneer uniform which consists of a white shirt and dark blue trousers for boys and a white blouse and blue skirt for girls, together with the blue cap. The 10-to-13-year-olds, from the fourth to the seventh grades, are Thälmann Pioneers. They wear a red neckerchief along with the Pioneer uniform. Every Pioneer receives a membership book or card.

Life within the Pioneer Organization is based on statutes and laws. These contain standards of conduct which lead children to respect working people, to love their homeland, to show friendship for children of all nations and to stand up for peace and active solidarity. In their statutes and laws, Pioneers pledge to be good friends, to learn diligently, to love their parents, to live a healthy life, to gladly sing, dance and play.

The immediate sphere of activity and experience for each Pioneer is within the community of his or her Pioneer group. This is made up of all the Pioneers in a school class and the Pioneer groups of the entire school constitute a Pioneer friendship association. Each group has its own Pioneer leader—an honorary function exercised by older pupils (FDJ members) or often by teachers, by parents or other suitable adults and young people. The Pioneer friendship association is headed by its own official who is a full-time FDJ functionary with training as a teacher.

Pioneer leaders acquire their qualification at teacher-training institutions, colleges of education and at other training centres belonging to the Pioneer Organization itself, the course of study lasting four years and resulting in qualification as leader of a Pioneer friendship association and as a lower-level teacher.

To a large extent, Pioneers are responsible for the life within their own group and thus they learn at an early age how to put socialist democracy into practice. Each Pioneer group elects its own leadership—the group council. This is made up of a chairman, deputy chairman, secretary and other Pioneers allotted specific tasks. They all share responsibility for shaping life within their Pioneer group, they put forward ideas for interesting events and schemes and ensure that a good, comradely relationship exists between all group members.

All the Pioneers in a school elect, from their ranks, the friendship council which normally consist of 12 to 15 Pioneers. Under the leadership of the head of the Pioneer friendship association, the friendship council controls Pioneer life in the association and the individual groups. In this, the statute, commands and laws of the

Pioneers and the annual Pioneer programme constitute the basis of their activities. The Pioneer friendship association is supported in word and deed in organizing a varied Pioneer life, by teachers, the parent-teacher association, the individual parents' groups, the FDJ school branch and sponsoring enterprises.

An important aspect of Pioneer life is the close relationship with the working class and all working people. Almost all schools maintain links of sponsorship with an enterprise or an institution in their area. These are predominantly production enterprises. Each class has a work team from the factory as its sponsoring brigade; the latter plays an active and varied part in the life of the class and its Pioneer group. This sponsorship work ever anew proves to be an exceptionally important educative factor. On the one hand, the Pioneers get an insight at an early age into the working and living conditions, the successes, difficulties and problems of working people. On the other hand, society as a whole can thus better fulfil its responsibility for the education of children, participating in a concrete way. New possibilities and potential for the shaping of an instructive and happy life for Pioneers and school pupils are constantly being introduced.

Cooperation between school and Pioneer Organization

The Pioneer Organization and the school do not just exist alongside each other. Together with the parental home, they constitute a unified whole. With its own ways and means, the Pioneer Organization directs the initiative and activities of its members towards the accomplishment of tasks set for the school by society. With the involvement of all pupils and together with the teachers, it ensures an atmosphere of creative, disciplined and pleasant learning and work, comradely relations and mutual support among the pupils. Thus, it bears concrete responsibility for the further development of the school as a place of socialist learning, work and life for all pupils, and ensures that the boys and girls regard learning as their most important social mission and as their contribution to the further consolidation and strengthening or their state.

Of course the Pioneer Organization does not restrict its activities within the school to the business of learning. It rather assumes responsibility for the achievement of an interesting school life in its entirety. This entails above all the organization of a varied Pioneer life outside the confines of the school curriculum. Through numerous circles and work groups, the Pioneer Organization gives all children the opportunity to pursue their own special interests and to further develop particu-

lar talents. In their activities involving art, culture, sport, games and many other pursuits in line with their interests, Pioneers should not only acquire knowledge, but should, first and foremost, enjoy themselves. Life within the Pioneer Organization should be fun and attractive to all. Last but not least, the Pioneer Organization plays a considerable part in the arrangement of holiday schemes for all pupils.

The Pioneer Organization makes a sizable contribution to guaranteeing a fine, fulfilled life for all children.

Competitions for Pioneers

In its own right or together with governmental and other social bodies, the "Ernst Thälmann" Pioneer Organization arranges a multitude of events, competitions and contests. These take place in the spheres of social politics, foreign languages, science and technology, art and culture, sport and tourism. Such contests help substantially to increase the eagerness to learn and the pleasure of learning, to convey interesting experience and to ensure recreation and relaxation. In this way, the Pioneers also have the opportunity to show the general public what they can do. The following section is designed to illustrate some of their activities.

First of all, mention should be made of the *Young Innovators' Exhibitions*—abbreviated in German to MMM. In origin, this is a movement for young people involved in material production and other branches of the national economy and is aimed at displaying at central exhibitions, inventions, innovations and improvements by young workers, technicians and scientists and introducing them to a wide circle of users and interested parties. The Young Innovators' Exhibitions have developed into a true mass movement of our country's youth. In 1978 alone, more than 2.4 million young people took part in these exhibitions. The fact that this movement has increasingly spread to the youngest citizens of Pioneer age is quite natural, because both the school and the Pioneer Organization grant pupils and Pioneers extensive opportunities to become involved with technological sciences and the results and problems of the scientific and technological revolution. There is a multitude of work groups for scientific subjects and for special areas such as electrical engineering, electronics, agricultural engineering, soil fertility, mechanical engineering, construction, model building, socialist nature preservation and environmental policy.

The youngest citizens, the Young Pioneers, participate in interest groups such as model building, young naturalists' groups, circles for "skilled hands", technical handicrafts etc. Of course this inspires pleasure in the individual's independent, creative ability to construct models, solve mathematical problems and make things, and it gives rise to the need to produce useful things for oneself. In this, the Pioneers

receive support and intellectual stimulation from the leaders of the work groups, from teachers, from skilled workers and engineers in sponsoring enterprises and, of course, from their parents. Full of pride, they can then exhibit in their schools many useful pieces of demonstration or experimental equipment dealing with the most varied of school subjects. In 1978, for example, there were more than 5,000 such exhibitions at school level, with the participation of almost 800,000 Young Pioneers and Thälmann Pioneers. A considerable number of the exhibits have found their way to the central Young Innovators' Exhibition, which every autumn occupies several halls on the Leipzig Fair grounds.

In our schools a great deal of importance is attached to the teaching of mathematics. In this, the annual *mathematics contests* have proved to be an effective means of encouraging Young Pioneers to enjoy a mathematical way of thinking and puzzling. This contest for Thälmann Pioneers and members of the FDJ (pupils from the 5th to the 12th grades) begins at school level where almost all pupils take part. Those with the best results progress to the district and then to the county contests and subsequently to the central competition (at national level). The pupils who win here participate in the International Mathematics Contest, which annually involves school pupils from some 15 to 20 European countries.

Young Pioneers from the 2nd and 3rd grades take part in ABC-mathematics contests which are devised to correspond with their level of knowledge.

Every year the *Russian competition* follows a similar course. This serves to achieve a better command of the Russian language, as well as to extend children's knowledge of the Soviet Union and its people, and to strengthen the close relations existing with the Lenin Pioneers.

Greater details about the many varied opportunities for involvement with *art and culture* are given elsewhere in this booklet. All that needs to be pointed out here, is the variety in this respect evident in the life of Pioneer groups and friendship associations. The gamut stretches from song, recitation and story-telling contests, via musical talent shows, children's theatre and cabaret, through to acrobatics. "Festivals of Young Talent" in the schools always constitute a highlight of the academic year. Great stress is laid on instilling in the participant Pioneers a feeling of success on making a public performance, and on inspiring an awareness that they can give other people pleasure. Thus, the life of Pioneer groups incorporates performances by choirs, musicians, ensembles and soloists, which are held in kindergartens, old people's homes and clubs, for workers in sponsoring enterprises and at large-scale public events.

Active involvement on the part of the youngest citizens

In the social and political sphere, there are all kinds of knowledge competitions in line with the syllabus and level of learning on the part of Pioneers and pupils. These cover, for example, the development, history, economy and geography of the GDR, the Soviet Union and the rest of fraternal socialist countries. There are wall newspaper contests with similar content and exhibitions of the achievements obtained by "Young Historian" work groups, which are concerned with investigation into the history of their area.

In this connection, mention should be made of an interesting movement which bears the title *"Kurs 80—bei uns zu Hause"* (Course set for 1980 in our home areas). The circumstances are as follows: The current Five-Year Plan for the development of the national economy and community life in the GDR as a whole covers the period until 1980. It is the task of Pioneers —within their own area, town, city district or village—to investigate and continuously follow the changes taking place in life there, to find out what is to be accomplished by 1980 and how it is achieved.

There are forums held under the slogan "Treffpunkt Zukunft" (rendezvous for the future) with party and governmental officials or representatives from local assemblies. It is here that the Pioneers learn of the projects being tackled in their neighbourhood and who is involved. The Pioneers visit industrial and agricultural enterprises, construction sites, places of cultural interest and other institutions, and see for themselves how the plans are turned into reality. In this way, they learn at first-hand what efforts are being undertaken to render life under socialism richer and more pleasant. And everything that the Pioneers find out and experience is recorded in words and pictures, in reports, stories and poems, in films and slides, in calculations and statistics. Many Pioneer friendship associations compile a chronicle of the Five-Year Plan.

Taking part in socially useful work

Socially useful work constitutes an important part of Pioneer life. This involves activities which above all give the children pleasure, benefit them personally or help other people. It is now a matter of course for Pioneers to help keep tidy their school, playground, school garden and the immediate vicinity, to tend this area and improve it in a variety of ways. In addition, Pioneer groups undertake the cultivation of small parks and lawns in their residential districts or the upkeep of memorial sites. On their own initiative, a great many Pioneers look after elderly people, helping them with the shopping and the maintenance of their dwell-

ing. They collect vast quantities of medicinal herbs for the pharmaceutical industry and chestnuts, acorns, berries etc. for zoos and for foresters to distribute to animals.

The Pioneer Organization has started off a great action campaign with its collection of scrap materials. The apparently overstated slogan announcing that by tracking down scrap, millions of marks can be recovered for the state, is in fact no exaggeration. The sight of Young Pioneers with all possible carts and barrows loaded high with waste paper, waste fabrics, bottles and scrap-metal has become part of the daily scene on the streets in our towns and villages. And when the Pioneers ring the door-bell and ask for waste material, the adult who answers always gets the impression that they are undertaking this with great enthusiasm. An impressive record: in 1978 Pioneers in the GDR collected waste material valued at more than six million marks and gave it to the national economy. The money received is largely paid by the Pioneer groups into the solidarity fund. Part of it is spent on outings, excursions or celebrations for the Pioneers.

Homes for the Pioneers

For events arranged by their organization and for all leisure activities, the Pioneers have available their own facilities. In the GDR there are 141 Young Pioneer houses, Pioneer parks in district and county towns, 48 central Pioneer camps, 194 centres for young naturalists and technologists, 45 hiking centres, as well as 18 Pioneer railways (narrow gauge), "children's space centres", Pioneer ships, a central observatory and a central Pioneer film studio. All these establishments have excellent equipment at their disposal. They are maintained from governmental funds. The Pioneers are the proprietors.

The "Wilhelm Pieck" Pioneer Republic is the largest and also a unique training and recreational centre belonging to the "Ernst Thälmann" Pioneer Organization. It is a settlement with an area of 3.14 square kilometres and is complete with living accommodation, school, catering and community facilities, tent-camps and sports facilities; it is situated in the middle of woodland directly alongside the Werbellinsee, in a charming area of countryside close to the capital Berlin. It was established in 1952, a few years after the founding of the GDR, on the suggestion of the FDJ Central Council and by decision of the People's Chamber.

Wilhelm Pieck, the first President of the GDR, performed the official opening ceremony and granted it the right to bear his name. Every year, some 5,000 members of Pioneer councils (mainly from the sixth grade) are trained in the Pioneer Republic to hold functions in the Pioneer friendship associations, the courses lasting several weeks. Naturally, they continue their systematic instruction there. As they themselves—with the guidance and support of

experienced Pioneer leaders—develop a consummate, high level of Pioneer life, exchange experience and attend special courses, they are qualified for their role on the friendship association and group councils.

During the summer holidays, the "Wilhelm Pieck" Pioneer Republic is an international meeting place for children. There, delegates from the Pioneer organizations in the fraternal socialist countries and from other friendly children's organizations spend relaxing holidays, rich in experience, together with the Thälmann Pioneers. In 1960, the first CIMEA (International Committee of Children's and Youth Organizations of the World Federation of Democratic Youth) international summer camp was held in the Pioneer Republic. In 1973 —during the 10th World Festival of Youth and Students in Berlin—47 delegations from 44 countries in Europe, America, Asia and Africa stayed as guests at the Werbellinsee.

At present, in the Pioneer park in Berlin, feverish building activity is in progress. A Pioneer "Palace" is under construction which will offer children considerable opportunities for leisure pursuits. It will comprise two multipurpose halls (one large, one small), a ballet hall, gymnasium and swimming baths, puppet theatre, discotheque, "children's space centre", greenhouse, exhibition rooms and numerous facilities for meeting of interest groups. In 1979, the 30th anniversary of the GDR, the Pioneers will take possession of the building. This costly project can be seen as an expression of the love and care which the GDR government devotes to the Young Pioneers.

The Young Pioneers and Thälmann Pioneers have, of course, their own *newspapers and magazines*. For the Young Pioneers there is the *ABC-Zeitung* (published monthly) and for the Thälmann Pioneers *Trommel* (published weekly). Pioneers belonging to the only national minority in the GDR, the Sorbs, have corresponding newspapers, *Plomjo* and *Plemje*, published in Sorb. The journals *practic, technikus* and *Jugend und Technik* are aimed at boys and girls with an interest in model making, science and technology. *Atze, Mosaik* and *Fröhlichsein und singen* are magazines offering more general, light entertainment. They are all indispensable factors in the shaping of a Pioneer life which is rich in content.

Friends throughout the world

The "Ernst Thälmann" Pioneer Organization maintains good relations with the Pioneer organizations in socialist countries and with all progressive children's movements in Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa. It has been an active member of the CIMEA since its foundation. Within the framework of this committee, it makes an important contribution to the further consolidation of the progressive international children's movement. The

CIMEA action campaign for "A happy childhood in a peaceful world" is supported by the policies of our government, and also by a multitude of activities undertaken by Young Pioneers and Thälmann Pioneers and by the "Ernst Thälmann" Pioneer Organization as a whole.

For example, since 1960, international Pioneer camps have been held annually in the GDR. Children come from throughout the world to these camps and they spend carefree holidays along with the Thälmann Pioneers.

There are particularly close ties of friendship between the GDR Pioneers and Pioneers in the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries. More than 2,000 friendship agreements have been concluded between Pioneer friendship associations belonging to our organization and those in the Soviet Union and other socialist states. Hundreds of thousands of Thälmann Pioneers correspond regularly with Lenin Pioneers in the Soviet Union. Every year "friendship" trains carry thousands of Thälmann Pioneers and Lenin Pioneers to visit their friends. Every two years a "friendship" plane carries Pioneers between Bulgaria and the GDR. In 1977, Pioneers travelled to 14 European countries, as well as to Cuba, the Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria and the People's Republic of the Congo.

The more than 5,000 "clubs of international friendship" within the Pioneer friendship associations are largely responsible for the fact that these good relations exist in living form, not only between high-ranking bodies, but also between school Pioneer friendship associations.

A vital element in the internationalist education supplied by the Pioneer Organization is solidarity with the peoples, youth and children of those countries which are struggling against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, fascism, reaction and exploitation, and for peace, democracy, independence and social progress. The increased, intensified internationalist attitude of our Young Pioneers is demonstrated in the many solidarity activities which already help determine daily life in our republic. The solidarity of our Young Pioneers and Thälmann Pioneers with the struggle of progressive forces in Chile against the military, fascist dictatorship takes many forms. A few years ago, Pioneers sent postcards with painted roses to Angela Davis and thus helped to free her from the prison of the American class-biased system of justice. They later sent just as many cards—lovingly drawn and depicting flowers and the sun—to Chile in order to voice and stress their demand for the release of Comrade Luis Corvalan.

Every spring, a "Week of Socialist Pioneer Aid" is organized in our country. Then the older Pioneers work on public projects and the younger ones collect waste materials, or else home-made items and trinkets are sold at bazaars. The receipts from these activities are paid into the solidarity account of the youth of the GDR. If all these "Weeks" from the past

ten years are considered together, then the total sum is almost 15 million marks which have benefitted children in other countries in many varied ways.

Everything offered by the school and the Pioneer Organization for children in the GDR forms part of our society's far-reaching concern for the harmonious development of all children. This involves, above all, care for the child's health and for healthy physical development from birth to adulthood.

III.
Healthy children—a concern of society

The rising birth-rate in the GDR, a highly developed industrial state, testifies to our country's social policy which encourages families and is kind to children. It not only offers the family economic security, but at the same time it inspires a feeling of human warmth and happy confidence.

Couples' desire for a family with one or several children has intensified, largely due to the comprehensive socio-political measures of recent years, designed to support the family and mother and child. Since 1975 the birth-rate has risen continuously and in 1977 it achieved a new level with 223,200 births (in comparison with 179,000 in 1974). In 1978 in the GDR, with a total population of approximately 17 million inhabitants, 232,136 babies were born. At the same time, this happy fact presents socialist society and many of its governmental establishments and institutions with increased responsibility for the healthy development of babies and children.

Pre-natal care

The social concern about the healthy development of every child begins long before birth. Specialist doctors and nurses in almost 900 ante-natal centres (with visiting surgeries in rural areas) monitor all expectant mothers to ensure a normal pregnancy. In line with the latest regulations issued by the Ministry of Health in April 1978, this involves the unity of

medical measures of diagnosis, treatment and after-care to deal at an early stage with possible complications during pregnancy. This takes place in the form of both outpatient and in-patient general or specialist treatment in the appropriate departments of gynaecology and obstetrics. It is worth the trouble of putting mothers-to-be under expert medical care as early as possible. Thus, in 1978, 88 per cent of expectant mothers underwent an initial expert medical examination before the 16th week of pregnancy. Thereafter, in the case of more than 66 per cent of all mothers-to-be, there followed between eight and ten or even more further examinations with the aid of modern medical technology. Corresponding to individual cases, the state of health of the expectant mother and her child is consolidated with additional medical prescriptions or courses of prophylactic spa treatment. In addition, all expectant mothers have the opportunity, within their own neighbourhood, of taking part in special gymnastic courses to prepare for the birth and in theoretical and practical classes about caring for the newly-born baby. It goes without saying that these courses, along with all medical consultations and prescriptions for mother and child — indeed for all working people in the GDR — are free of charge.

Care for mother and child also includes maternity leave with full pay, which was increased in 1976 from 18 to 26 weeks. As long as the expectant mother is still at work, she is not allowed to undertake jobs which either endanger her health or are physically arduous. The financial aspect is also important. Thus, mothers receive 1,000 marks for every child born—a sum which provides welcome aid for the family as it buys the initial furnishings and outfit necessary for its newly-born member.

In addition, young married couples' desire for children is promoted through governmental funds. They receive loans to the value of 5,000 marks repayable within eight years and free of interest. For the first child born in this period 1,000 marks are deducted from the amount to be repaid, for the second child a further 1,500 marks, and for the third child the remaining 2,500 marks are waived. Large families receive manifold financial and material allowances.

In the GDR, the advanced system of modern ante-natal care, obstetric and monitoring measures has led to success in the struggle against infant mortality—success designated as exemplary by the World Health Organization (WHO). In 1970, the infant mortality rate was 18.5 per 1.000 live births, but now this figure has been reduced to 12.9 and the downward trend is continuing. At the same time, the number of mothers dying as a result of complications during confinement has dropped to 1.9 per 10,000 live births.

Infant health care

After the care devoted to the health of the newborn baby in the obstetric clinic and the first intensive medical examination carried out by a pediatrician, post-natal advice centres take over responsibility for specialist, medical supervision and social welfare. These cover 87.7 per cent of all newborn babies, 96 per cent of one-year-olds and 88.6 per cent of all two-year-olds. Healthy development is checked according to specific criteria laid down in a uniform programme of medical examinations, the results of which are reflected in a written record which accompanies the child from birth until he or she leaves school. Thus, in case of negative health developments, conclusions can be drawn at any time about potential causes from the child's medical history and it is then possible to implement appropriate courses of treatment.

The network of almost 10,000 post-natal advice centres even includes remote villages. Here, there are branch surgeries where pediatricians and welfare workers give regular consultations. It is a prime medical and social concern to monitor young children's intellectual and physical development, and, where necessary, to introduce appropriate measures to support parents in the upbringing and care of their children. To this end, about 2.9 million consultations take place annually, not including the considerably more time-consuming care devoted to problem children and many home visits.

In our state, great emphasis is placed on health education and considerable forces and funds are employed for this purpose. Bearing in mind the practical philosophy, "Prevention is better than cure", a great many efforts are aimed at children—either directly or through parents, doctors and teachers—to instil in them the notion of a healthy way of life as a natural requirement. According to their age, children should learn to feel personally responsible for their own health, regarding it as one of life's joys which is open to influence. In theory, this should be a very pleasing undertaking, but in view of the "sins" of adults it is often also a very troublesome one. Regular bodily hygiene, meaningful organization of a daily routine with sufficient sleep, play and sport, early warning about the dangers of household chemicals, medicines, alcohol and nicotine—let these be mentioned merely as an outline to make the concern apparent. An important aspect of the programme of monitoring and care lies in the increasing health awareness of each individual, and to this end, the GDR has its National Committee for Health Education. This has the task of using all existing scientific and organizational possibilities in this area to enlighten the population. This is carried out in close cooperation with URANIA (a society for the dissemination of scientific knowledge) and, above all, with the world-famous GDR „Deutsches Hygienemuseum" in

Dresden. Knowledge about man and his way of life, plus suggestions for the maintenance of personal health, are conveyed through scientific information, rich in ideas, which is prepared for the general public. Activities concerning health education have a firm place in the timetable and syllabus of crêches, kindergartens and schools.

Care in crèches and kindergartens

At present, the GDR health service runs more than 6,000 crèches with close on 260,000 places —almost 90 per cent of them in day centres. Between the ages of one and three, children are looked after here by qualified staff. Since 1960, the number of these establishments with modern facilities and expert supervision has doubled, while the number of places has been trebled. With the continuous increase in the number of births, this is still not sufficient to meet all demands.

Fixed standards govern the construction and fitting out of crèches, concerning everything from their siting with easy access and in as environmentally favourable a position as possible, the size of the playrooms, sleeping quarters and open spaces, through to the choice of furniture, age-related toys, clothing and linen. Special hygiene requirements are made regarding room temperature, lighting and sanitary facilities. Regulations to prevent accidents are no less stringent.

The children in crèches are looked after by personnel specially trained to carry out the duties of this combined teaching and medical profession. The training entails ten years of schooling followed by a three-year technical school course, in which comprehensive understanding of young children's healthy development and the related nursing duties has to be acquired. Every crèche has one or several doctors in charge and they regularly examine all the children.

The youngest children are fed according to the latest findings in nutritional physiology. For them, there is ready-made food comprising milk, fruit and vegetables; this is industrially produced with strict observance of the laws of hygiene and has a particularly high nutritional value. More substantial food is prepared in the crèches for the older children in line with standardized recipes; this guarantees an assimilation of calories and nutrition appropriate to their age.

Care is taken above all to ensure that children get a great deal of fresh air, light and sunshine, that they can gain sufficient exercise and enjoy necessary periods of rest. Every mother who entrusts her child to a crèche knows that the youngster is in the best of care and supervision and can develop well.

In addition to the fact that existing crèche facilities are not yet sufficient to accommodate all children, our state encourages those working

mothers who want to look after their child themselves for a certain period of time. In fact, the first year of life is one of the most decisive phases in a child's development and nobody is better qualified than the mother to observe and influence it. Consequently, every working mother is entitled to unpaid leave during this time and, at present, more than 80 per cent take advantage of this. After the birth of a second child and all subsequent children, mothers can receive a year's leave with financial support. In 1978 almost all eligible working women availed themselves of this opportunity. Allowances amount to a monthly sum of at least 300 marks for the second child and to a minimum of 350 marks for the third child. Single mothers who cannot immediately be given a crèche place receive assistance of 300 marks per month, even for the first child. Throughout the entire period of the break in employment, the old job is guaranteed to the mothers along with all related rights and privileges.

Care in the crèche ties up with education in the kindergarten. As a pre-school institution, the kindergarten is under the control of the Ministry of Education, which shares responsibility with the health service for the healthy physical and intellectual development of the child.

From the age of three, children are monitored in their physical and intellectual advancement by the youth health protection service. Within this medical organization, work is carried out by pediatricians and children's nurses as well as welfare workers with special knowledge of development at pre-school age and in subsequent age groups. They carry out regular mass examinations in the kindergartens, implement the vaccination programme started shortly after birth and devote equal care and attention to children who do not attend kindergarten.

In addition, there are some special medical measures which concern six-year-olds. The principal one involves two "maturity" examinations, separated in time, for an average of 250,000 school beginners—the first a year before entering school and the second immediately prior to entry. In the first examination, the doctor judges, in the light of relevant, proven criteria, the educational potential of the child. His opinion is compared with the pedagogic assessment made by the kindergarten teacher. A great deal of value is attributed to these examinations carried out at different times. They enable the doctor not to reach a decision on a child's educational potential purely on the basis of a momentarily favourable or inopportune situation, but allow him in appropriate instances to observe the child further and help him or her. Practice has proved that a good start in a child's school career, success and experience in the first learning phase all exert a decisive psychological influence on the child's capability throughout his or her school life.

Nobody is forgotten

Over the following 10 to 12 years, expert school doctors monitor the health of children and young people; in this they receive substantial support through information supplied by parents and teachers. Joint medical and pedagogic measures assist pupils with a low level of attainment or those who return to school after a long illness. Every year, 45,000 children and young people are granted courses of prophylactic spa or rest treatment. For a further 20,000 girls and boys doctors prescribe courses of curative treatment in children's sanatoria or special wards in government-run spa institutions. Additional medical surveillance of all children is carried out before the start of compulsory swimming lessons and adolescents undergo similar monitoring before the final phase of schooling when they receive polytechnical instruction in socialist production and, in connection with this, they undertake a short period of physical labour.

Just as important as the examinations before starting school is the medical check-up carried out when the child reaches adolescence, a time decisive for career choice. During this phase, the school doctor assesses—in the light of the full medical record kept from birth—the all-round physical and intellectual development of the young person and from this he derives helpful information regarding the selection and suitability of specific professions. Every young person should, without restriction, be in a position to learn and carry out his or her chosen profession and be able to master the tasks set according to his or her capabilities.

It is a maxim concerning health care for all children and young people in the GDR that, without exception, the healthy physical and intellectual development of the younger generation should be monitored according to uniform methods and on an equal basis. This has led to distinctive precautions against illnesses specific to this age group. An essential feature of this modern health protection system is a precisely timed vaccination schedule against infectious diseases in childhood. More than 90 per cent of all children in the relevant age group take advantage of these vaccinations. Every year, 35 million marks is made available for highly developed vaccines to combat children's illnesses.

The success of the preventive vaccination scheme, designated as exemplary by the WHO, is reflected in these few statistics which are thought-provoking in their force of expression. In 1949, the year in which the GDR was founded:

- 28 out of every 10,000 children died of tuberculosis; now and in the future no more will perish, as the "scourge of the poor" is being effectively combatted.
- 500 out of every 100,000 children contracted whooping cough; now hardly anybody catches this disease and if they do, it is only when inoculation has been neglected.

The vaccination schedule currently in force in the GDR

Age	*Type of vaccination*
1st week	Vaccination against tuberculosis (BCG)
2nd month onwards	Oral immunization against polio (three times at intervals of four weeks against the three different types of polio)
3rd month	First inoculation against diphteria, whooping cough and tetanus
4th month	Second inoculation against diphtheria, whooping cough and tetanus
5th month	Third inoculation against diphtheria, whooping cough and tetanus
9th month	Vaccination against measles
2nd year	Oral immunization against polio with a trivalent vaccine, first vaccination against smallpox
3rd year	Fourth inoculation against diphtheria, whooping cough and tetanus
5th year	Fifth inoculation against diphtheria, whooping cough and tetanus
8th year	Oral immunization against polio with a trivalent vaccine
11th year	Inoculation against diphtheria and tetanus
12th year	Revaccination against smallpox
16th year	Inoculation against tetanus Tuberculin tests followed by vaccination against tuberculosis (BCG) if necessary

· 75,000 children were afflicted with measles, a disease which is often underestimated in its possible complications; today about 1,000 children contract the illness.

· In 1963, as a result of oral immunization, it was possible to completely eradicate the dreaded infantile paralysis (poliomyelitis). Previously more than 10,000 children had contracted the disease with one in ten suffering complications, resulting in paralysis.

· For more than ten years now, tetanus in children and young people has been prevented by effective vaccinations.

· In 1974 preventive immunization achieved ultimate victory over diphtheria, a disease often leading to complications.

Medical aid for sick and handicapped children

Just as in the educational sphere all possible attention is devoted to physically and mentally handicapped children, so they are also granted special medical care. In special crèches, kindergartens and schools, their physical and mental welfare is looked after by qualified medical staff who, together with the teachers, ensure that the children's capabilities are developed to the full. They also have at their disposal special courses of spa and rest treatment. It goes without saying that all medical services for these children are free of charge.

For competent care and treatment of sick children and adolescents, it is essential to have a sufficient number of child specialists and nurses, as well as refined medical institutions. Some 3,000 child specialists look after the welfare of the younger generation in the GDR. They are employed to treat outpatients in pediatric practices and health centres, and inpatients in children's clinics and hospital wards. Recently, special treatment centres have been set up where highly qualified doctors can concentrate on serious and chronic children's illnesses, primarily on diseases of the lungs, heart, kidneys and blood. Modern medical technology is available for diagnosis and therapy.

Thus there are 22 centres for the treatment of mucoviscidosis, an innate, generalized disturbance of secretion particularly in the pancreas and the bronchial mucous glands, as well as an extensive network of special treatment centres for children afflicted with chronic bronchitis. Specialists look after children with cardio-vascular diseases in seven treatment centres. Chronic kidney diseases are dealt with in 30 centres, three of which are in a position to provide haemodialysis, immediate aid in the case of poisoning, or constantly required purification of the blood of toxic catabolites, with the aid of "artificial kidneys", in the case of kidney failure. Children suffering from malignant diseases of organs or the blood—such as tumours or leukaemia—are treated and looked after, mostly over a long period of time, in 16 specialized and 10 highly specialized centres. Finally, there are nine centres for family advice concerning genetics. These help to look after children with hereditary diseases and provide scientific advice for their parents and close relatives with regard to the planning of any further births.

The many, varied types of physical and mental handicaps are also examined, treated and monitored on a long-term basis in appropriate specialized centres. This supervision involves children and young people whose healthy, age-related development is impaired by a troubled family life or other negative environmental factors. The duties of such treatment centres stretch far beyond purely medical care. Doctors, nurses and welfare workers also endeavour to bring a favourable influence to bear on the mental and social life of young patients. Before the end of all treatment, medical specialists, psychologists and teachers work in close cooperation to open up all possible courses of rehabilitation, in order to grant these boys and girls pleasure in life through achievements and successful experiences in a normal social environment.

The children's and youth health protection service is constantly being further developed. The main responsibility for this is borne by the Institute of Children's and Youth Hygiene, an institution under the Ministry of Health, which ensures and coordinates scientific forward planning in this field. Doctors from various theoretical and practical areas of medicine

carry out research in close cooperation with teachers, psychologists and sociologists. They undertake practice-oriented research, the results of which have a rapid effect on the care for all children and young people, both in the GDR as well as abroad. This is ensured primarily by the medical and scientific societies, associations of medical specialists, which cooperate with partner organizations within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and which also maintain numerous other international contacts. Through local in-service training facilities, all those involved with children's and young people's medical care are kept informed about the latest scientific findings.

Thus a circle is closed, at the centre of which there stand the child and the adolescent, whose health and well-being, happiness and security are consistently ensured in the socialist society.

IV. Meaningful leisure pursuits for all children

In our society, meaningful leisure pursuits are regarded as an essential feature of a socialist way of life. They help to shape a contented, happy, optimistic life, particularly in the case of young people. Leisure pursuits are chiefly the responsibility of the „Ernst Thälmann" Pioneer Organization, which coordinates and combines all other activities arranged by governmental and social organizations.

The variety of leisure pursuits offered allows for personal interests, inclinations and capabilities. Every child should be able to do things he or she enjoys. Meaningful leisure activities should satisfy and also arouse interests, develop talents and skills and help mould the character. Society and government have developed a comprehensive system of material and intellectual opportunities to indulge in meaningful leisure pursuits. This starts with toys. Two thirds of the nationally-owned toy industry's 35,000 articles bear the state seal of "Educationally valuable toy".

The exceedingly wide range of opportunities for meaningful leisure stretches from diverse cultural facilities, work groups and interest circles in schools, clubs and houses of culture, through to sports and holiday activities. Likewise on public celebrations, such as the GDR national holiday (7 October), 1 May and International Children's Day (1 June), children come into their own enjoying all kinds of entertainment and interesting activities. Similarly, mention should be made of the traditional Christmas fairs held in the larger towns, for

which children's sparkling eyes have really become a symbol.

Let us glance at the statistics concerning work and interest groups in schools, public clubs, houses of culture, Pioneer houses and young technologists', naturalists' and hikers' centres. In the field of culture and art alone, there are 32,000 work groups involving more than half a million school pupils. 214,000 pupils take part in 16,800 scientific and technological work groups, and 45,000 participate in 3,000 circles for social sciences. In addition, there are 26,000 work groups with 375,000 members concerned with first aid and health care, transport, fire prevention, needlework and housekeeping, philately and much more besides. Participation of Pioneers and school pupils in these work groups (which normally meet once a week) is entirely voluntary and free of charge. The supervisors, who are mainly teachers along with artists and other public figures, receive financial remuneration which is paid by the state, as is the cost of all necessary material aids.

Visual and fine arts are particularly in demand

A considerable part of Pioneers' and school pupils' leisure activities are concerned with art and culture. According to their ages, children are given every opportunity to learn about the treasures of national and world culture. It is an important principle to ensure that they do not simply become "consumers of art", but rather that they are inspired to tackle their own creative, artistic activities, in line with their personal inclinations and talents. A rich cultural life should become a matter of necessity and habit for them.

In the GDR, there are five professional *children's and youth theatres* which aim their productions exclusively at young audiences aged between six and sixteen. These exist in the capital Berlin, in Leipzig, Dresden, Halle and Magdeburg. At a number of state-financed theatres there are special children's sections. In the first three mentioned theatres alone, almost 500 plays were performed in the 30 years up to 1977—half of them were either world or GDR premières. Other theatres also provide a rich selection for children, with some 70 new productions per year. In order to satisfy the different age groups the repertoire is very varied ranging from fairy-tale plays and the classical heritage to contemporary drama and matinées on special occasions.

For years, the annual number of visitors to the five children's and youth theatres has consistently reached the figure of some 700,000. There is hardly a performance which is not a sellout. Many children visit "their" theatre regularly, two or three times a year. Ticket prices are very low: in Berlin between one and three marks, in the other cities between 0.50 and one mark. For visits by Pioneer groups and

school classes from places which do not have a theatre, travel costs exceeding one mark are paid for from state funds.

For the theatre staff, things do not begin and end with the performance of a play. Their contacts with children and the young audience, as well as with parents, are diverse and productive. Introductory talks about the plays, discussions after the performance, invitations for children and parents to attend rehearsals—these are all part of a good tradition. Constant efforts are being made to find new ways of cooperating with audiences. In many places, actors and stage managers carry on these contacts by looking after amateur dramatic groups and societies for cabaret or puppet shows in schools and club houses; there are 3,400 such interest circles with almost 50,000 children who are keen to take part in theatrical activities.

Every year to mark World Theatre Day in March, the government organizes a theatrical festival for young people; in addition at regular intervals, there are workshop performances of the children's and youth theatres, in which theatre staff, teachers and young spectators are all equally involved.

In the case of children, the *cinema* is a medium very much in demand. Almost a quarter of all cinema tickets sold in the GDR are for children's performances. These take place regularly, once or twice every weekend, in all picture houses, and showings are daily during the holidays. Admission costs between 0.25 and 0.50 marks. In addition, children's films are broadcast on television several times a week. The total selection for children includes more than 500 feature films, cartoons, documentaries and popularized science productions. Children's films are guaranteed a high degree of effectiveness and success through the existence of special children's and youth cinemas, as well as more than 300 film societies in picture houses, schools and club houses.

Since 1968, the Ministries of Culture and Education and artists associations have organized an annual National Festival of Children's Films which takes place during the winter holidays and consists of a week of children's and young people's films. Each time, a county is chosen to stage the festival and the films are shown in several towns and villages. A jury made up of children under the age of 14 reaches its own decisions on the awarding of honours and diplomas for the best films. In addition to the film presentations there are numerous allied events for children and young people: discussions, meetings with film-makers or drawing competitions to illustrate favourite films. During summer holidays throughout the GDR, there is a fortnight of films specially for children and every other year, during the winter holidays, a week of Soviet children's films is held.

In the GDR, great attention is devoted to introducing children to *music*. Thus, since 1965, a joint directive from the Ministers of Culture and Education has insisted that all 81 state orchestras in the GDR must give a speci-

fied number of concerts for school pupils of all age groups during each season. In almost every school there is at least a Pioneer choir or a song group. In total, the GDR can boast 7,800 choirs and song groups with more than 200,000 boys and girls, some 2,700 orchestras and instrumental groups with over 43,000 children involved, and more than 1,500 artistic dance groups with almost 25,000 young dancers.

Two representative examples should suffice as illustration of musical involvement. In Mühlau, a village with 2,600 inhabitants, situated near the county town of Karl Marx Stadt, there is a village ensemble with 160 singers. It comprises a pre-school choir, two school choirs and a mixed choir. The oldest member is aged 79 and the youngest is aged four. It is the concern of the choirmasters to inspire as early as possible a love of music in the children. Cultural officials from the Kaulsdorf village house of culture, at the edge of the Thüringian Forest, have set themselves the same target. They ensure that concerts are put on in the kindergartens of this village and in neighbouring communities. The youngsters are acquainted with carefully selected pieces of music ranging from simple children's songs to classical études which are played by pupils from the music school in the nearby district town of Saalfeld.

Children who have a particular interest and talent can receive advanced musical instruction at special schools. These are comprehensive schools with extended instruction in music which incorporate highly regarded choirs and orchestras, as for example, the two internationally renowned boys' choirs—the Leipzig Thomanerchor and the Dresdner Kreuzchor. Children with above-average ability also have a chance to undertake long-term systematic training at one of the 91 state-run music schools with over 300 annexes and supporting establishments, and to be qualified for active participation in artistically exacting amateur ensembles or be selected to study at a college of music. Of the 35,000 pupils educated in the music schools, an average of 300 per year take up such a course of study.

The *Galiery of Friendship* is an exhibition, indeed a movement. It provides the organizational and content-determining framework for the leisure pursuits of children and young people aged between four and eighteen, in the sphere of visual and applied arts. In schools alone, there are more than 4,100 work and interest groups for painting and drawing, with almost 60,000 members. They work with ceramics, plastics, textile and decorative forms.

The „Gallery of Friendship" has continuous exhibitions of the best work of all pupils in schools and pre-school institutions. In order to give the young artists an extra incentive, every two years selected work is exhibited in the district towns, then in county towns and finally the best achievements are shown in the capital of the republic. There the best work is honoured with the awarding of bronze, silver

and gold medals. During the course of a year. the "Gallery of Friendship" exhibits work from a total of 500,000 to 600,000 contributors, ranging from the lowest to the highest levels of achievement.

As in other art activities, there are two essential aspects here. On the one hand, the "Gallery" movement should intensify a love of art and an appreciation of it beyond the boundaries of school lessons and boys and girls should be stimulated to indulge in their own creative, artistic activities. On the other hand, the notion of „Friendship" makes a valid statement about the humanistic content of the movement. Such themes as the struggle of world public opinion for the liberation of Luis Corvalan after the fascist coup in Chile and the 60th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution have provided a stimulus for artistic creation.

The curators of the state museums in Berlin have created another opportunity to acquaint children with art and inspire in them an appreciation for works of art. Within the scope offered by a children's gallery, they regularly arrange guided tours and talks about works of art for children aged between five and ten. For pupils aged six to twelve, special programmes and exhibitions are organized. In the meantime, this initiative of the Berlin museums has been taken up by many small museums throughout the country.

A good book

Three quarters of all schoolchildren in the GDR make regular use of libraries. On average they borrow 20 books per year. In the state-run general libraries, 35 per cent of all readers are children; 28 per cent of the book stocks is made up of children's literature. The use of libraries is always free of charge. A state-operated subscription scheme for the purchase of children's books, known as the "Pupils' Book Club", makes it easier for children to build up their own little library. They can buy five books a year by mail-order. 180,000 school pupils take advantage of this, most of them living in smaller towns and villages.

Extensive work involving children and books is complemented by general and children's libraries through the organization of drawing competitions, readings by and discussions with authors and illustrators, etc. Approximately 150 GDR authors write books for children, including many famous names who also write for adults. The situation is similar concerning illustrators.

Trivial and obscene literature and books with fascist or racist content do not and cannot exist in our country. That would not only totally contradict the aim of our literary activities, but would also run counter to the spirit and ideals of working people, particularly the working class. In this respect, too, we have learnt from the lessons in the history of the German people. Our selection of children's literature includes

works from our humanist heritage, works about the history of our people, the struggle of the working class and its world outlook, as well as books which provide illumination on the meaning of life, develop a creative way of thinking, cultivate imagination and impart knowledge.

The Berlin "Kinderbuchverlag", the publishing house of the "Ernst Thälmann" Pioneer Organization, is the largest and most important publisher of children's literature in the GDR, with a total of 35,000 editions in 150 million copies (up to 1977). Its output includes hardback picture books for very young children, works of the cultural heritage incorporating editions with rhymes, poems, fairy tales and legends, books with contemporary themes, translations of foreign literature and works of popularized science for children aged between five and fourteen. Every year in the GDR, some 650 titles are printed with a total of about 17 million copies; these figures include books for pre-school children and young people.

As far as literature and publicity are concerned, the high point of the year is the "GDR Festival of Children's and Youth Literature" and the „Day of the Socialist Children's Book". On these occasions, there are numerous meetings between authors, illustrators, translators and children. To mark this festival of literature, educational bodies and the Pioneer Organization call on pupils to take part in literary and illustration contests. These competitions always have a slogan such as, for example, "Discoveries at home". The best work is selected by an expert jury, rewarded with book prizes and published in the children's press or in anthologies of pupils' work. For the more than 8,000 children (1,000 of them under the age of ten) who find help and guidance in approximately 780 literary circles, this provides an attractive opportunity for them to come forward with their own literary attempts.

Sports contests

In addition to compulsory school sports lessons which provide children with basic physical training, all pupils can voluntarily pursue their own special sporting inclinations and interests. More than 1.5 million children regularly take part in leisure sporting activities in school sports clubs and approximately 8,400 clubs belonging to the German Gymnastics and Sports Federation of the GDR (DTSB). As members of the DTSB, young children and older school pupils pay a monthly subscription of 0.20 marks which entitles them to take part in any kind of sport which interests them. Sports grounds, equipment and facilities provided for the DTSB by the government can be used free of charge by all those engaged in sports activities. The competitive involvement of young sportsmen and -women is backed up by a 50 to 75 per cent fare reduction on journeys to contests, and by comprehensive insurance cover (without the levying of any additional charges).

Since 1965, annual *Spartakiad contests* for children and young people have been held in the GDR. It is their aim to fill all children and adolescents with enthusiasm for regular exercise and training, as well as to lead talented youngsters to a high level of sporting performance.

In their outward appearance, the Spartakiad games resemble the Olympic Games and contribute to the realization of the Olympic ideal in the GDR. The Spartakiad contests of the early years of the GDR have developed into a broad movement which has proved its worth as a vital basis for sport in our country and today incorporates almost all children and adolescents engaging in sport. Spartakiad contests are held at all levels. Every two years there alternate county events and the national finale of the Children's and Youth Spartakiad Games for winter and summer sports. Every year district Spartakiad games are held, preceded by preliminary competitions in schools in which all pupils can participate in any number of sports. The national finals constitute the high point in GDR children's and youth sport and, at the same time, they serve to display the sporting achievements of the rising generation. Children and adolescents are entitled to take part if they have reached the standards for the Spartakiad games as laid down in the regulations.

Many Olympic, world and European champions have emerged from the ranks of Spartakiad victors—for example, Roland Matthes and Kornelia Ender in swimming, Renate Stecher, Ruth Fuchs, Waldemar Cierpinski and Wolfgang Nordwig in athletics, Hans-Georg Aschenbach in ski jumping and many more besides.

Spartakiad contests occupy a fixed position in the community life of districts and counties, indeed of our whole country. They are followed with great interest by the population and are attended by representatives of the government and social organizations. For the young participants, they are a great experience not only because of the competition, but also on account of the general, festive atmosphere and the many spectators.

In addition to the Children's and Youth Spartakiad Games, there are many other sports contests, tournaments and school championships in a wide variety of sporting disciplines, competitions for the cups awarded by the "Ernst Thälmann" Pioneer Organization etc. Let us quote a few examples. There is the "International Friendship Four-Discipline Athletics Contest", in which Pioneers of all ages can participate. This is a competition held on a local basis with the results being compared with those of other areas. It involves the children's organizations of our fraternal socialist countries and other organizations affiliated to the CIMEA. Then there is the "Kleine Friedensfahrt" (Junior peace race) held parallel to the great International long-distance cycle race for peace, which takes place every May between the cities of Warsaw, Berlin and Prague. Every year, sports competitions are arranged specially for the Young Pioneers.

In addition, there are hikes, trips, excursions and expeditions for the various age groups. This all satisfies the Pioneers' need for adventure and exciting experiences. In this way, they consolidate their hiking knowledge, for example about the use of map and compass or finding their way without such aids, and improve their knowledge about local flora and fauna.

Happy holidays for all children

This is not simply a slogan. It is rather a programme for which all society has worked purposefully and with increasing success since the foundation of our state. The aim has always been to realize the slogan "Happy holidays for all children" in its literal sense. In this the most important concern is the preservation of children's health.

Consequently, the GDR Youth Act gives instructions to all government bodies, enterprises, cooperatives and schools to develop conditions for children's holiday activities in such a way that they serve the youngsters' recreation, good health and physical fortification.

Success has been achieved, particularly during the past few years, in fundamentally increasing opportunities for the most varied kinds of holiday activities.

Enterprise-run holiday camps for the children of employees are very important. They are situated in scenically attractive regions of our country and accommodation is mainly in permanent buildings, although some tent-camps do exist for older children. For periods of 15 or 18 days, the children spend carefree holidays there. The enterprises bear complete responsibility for the preparations, organization and material, financial and staff requirements. They spend approximately 250 marks per child for a two-week stay, while the parents only have to make a very small contribution. Families with two children pay eight marks per child, families with three children contribute six marks and with four or more children the amount is four marks. The number of children able to stay in these camps has increased year by year. In 1978 it was as many as 700,000 in 3,800 such camps. On average that is one in every three or four GDR school pupils. According to a decision adopted at the 9th FDGB (trade unions) Congress, the number of places available should be at least 800,000 by 1980.

In addition more than 100,000 boys and girls enjoy a break every summer in the 48 *central Pioneer camps* which belong to the "Ernst Thälmann" Pioneer Organization. They are selected for such holidays by the schools. Participation in such a camp is a distinction.

Locally organized holiday schemes constitute a further form of diversion during vacations. For two to three weeks, children from

the first to the fourth grades are looked after all day and kept occupied by teachers and helpers. For this, parents pay one mark per day. For children from the fifth grade and above, local events are arranged in clubs and houses of culture, theatres and cinemas, museums and libraries, sports centres, zoos and weekend recreation centres. Finally, there is a system of trips, hikes, excursions and school camps which last for several days and make use of youth hostels, camp sites, hikers' centres and temporary accommodation in schools.

In addition, 800,000 children spend their holidays together with their parents in enterprise or trade union homes. Once again, the cost is minimal: children pay 30 marks for two weeks, adults 60 to 125 marks according to their salary. In 1978, 22,000 children (the number increases from year to year) took part in exchange schemes with enterprises in other socialist countries and spent their holidays there in enterprise camps.

Through these and other kinds of holiday schemes, every child has the chance to participate in sports, games, hiking, rambling and a variety of cultural events during the school holidays. Every year more than 300 million marks from the national budget, enterprises and trade unions are employed to this end. This figure only includes running costs, without considering the investment required for the construction and extension of holiday accommodation. There are some 250,000 working people engaged every year who are directly involved in the varied holiday activities—these are principally teachers, but there are also workers and salaried staff from enterprises and institutions, along with students and older school pupils, who serve as camp supervisors, hike organizers and teaching, medical and domestic staff. With an awareness of their responsibility and great enthusiasm, they work to serve the children's well-being. Thus, this social programme to provide children with holiday activities becomes reality and is rightly regarded as one of the greatest achievements of the working class in the GDR.

Every year on 1 June, the children of the GDR—indeed the entire population—celebrate the International Day of the Child. In our country, this is a cause for festivities, a demonstration of happy children living in the security and warmth of our socialist society. However, because socialists are fundamentally internationalists, our joy and satisfaction concerning the well-protected life led by children in our state is always coupled with the need for active solidarity with all those youngsters in the world who have to forego such a life, who are deprived of their fundamental rights and all the advantages which socialism can and does grant its children.